

# A New Online Assignment Tool

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# Undergraduate research in the classroom

## Advantages and scope

- Active learning
- Assignments as a tool for research
- Research as a process and output

## Constraints

- Difficult to custom-tailor
- A single goal  $\Rightarrow$  overly structured  $\Leftrightarrow$  research creativity
- Multiple goals  $\Rightarrow$  hard to evaluate

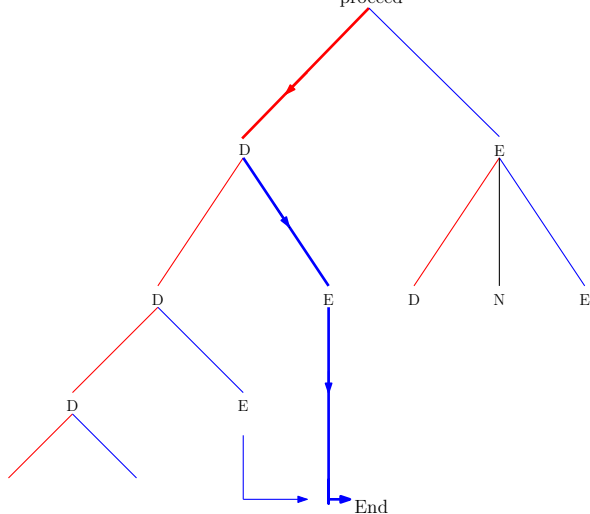
# Objectives of this tool

- Structure assignments as a decision tree
- Student centred: the degree of complexity is a variable
- Emphasize reasoning: justify choices at each stage of research
- Streamline process: only relevant steps become visible
- Facilitate reporting: use main text for theory, method, findings
- Automated: a PDF document with decisions made and reasoning
- Portable (online): access by mobile devices

**Implementation:** International Finance (advance undergraduate course)

# A decision-tree structure

Step 1: Two possible ways to proceed



# Examples

- Paper without a decision tree structure (highly open ended)
- Paper with a decision tree structure
- Current implementation

exchange rate, the effective (nominal) exchange rate, and the effective real exchange rate. See [Lecture Notes \(2014, chapter 2\)](#).

Answer the questions using an essay format with appropriate figures, tables and references: state your data sources in a note to each table and figure, and show or explain your calculations clearly. Your essay will be marked based on research, logic and organization, and analysis, as well as writing style appropriate for the level of this course. Your analysis, arguments and conclusions must be based on verifiable evidence.

### Assignment

You are asked to compute the effective (nominal) exchange rate, real exchange rate, and effective real exchange rate indexes using a *base year*. To calculate your base year, add the last digit of your student ID number to 1990. (For example, if your ID number ends with 9, you have  $1990 + 9 = 1999$  as *your* base year.)

(a) Compute the *effective exchange rate* index for the Canadian dollar from 1990 to the latest year available. In your calculations, you must use the national currencies of at least three major trading partners of Canada.

(b) For the same period, compute the *real exchange rate* index for the Canadian dollar in terms of each of the currencies in your answer to part (a). Calculate these real exchange rate indexes using either the consumer price index or the GDP deflator for each country.

(c) For the same period, compute the *real effective exchange rate* index for the Canadian dollar using the same currencies in your answer to part (a) and the price index in your answer to part (b).

You must report your findings in an essay format. Your essay must have a title, and the following structure:

1. **Introduction:** The introduction must grab the attention of the reader, and state the purpose of your essay. See [Turabian \(2010, Chapters 6–8\)](#) for effective writing.
2. **Main body:** The main body of your essay should briefly discuss your method(s). There should be a figure, which shows the nominal (spot) exchange rate (in terms of the U.S. dollar), effective nominal exchange rate, and the effective real exchange rate of the Canadian dollar from an official publication, such as the Bank of Canada and IMF, *International Financial Statistics*. You should report your own findings in a separate figure. You should compare and contrast the real and nominal effective exchange rates over time. Your discussion should inform the reader about the appreciation or depreciation of the Canadian dollar relative to these currencies over your sample period. See [Turabian \(2010, Chapter 11\)](#) for guidance on effective figures.
3. **Conclusion:** The conclusion should synthesize your findings and discuss their basic economic (policy)

1. To compute the (real) effective exchange rate index for the Canadian dollar from 1990 to the latest year available, you must use the national currencies of three major trading partners of Canada. Please choose three out of the five regions listed below and explain your choice.
  - (a) The euro area (go to Q2)
  - (b) Japan (go to Q3)
  - (c) Mexico (go to Q3)
  - (d) United Kingdom (go to Q3)
  - (e) United States (go to Q3)
2. The euro came into existence on January 1, 1999 and replaced the former national currencies of eleven countries, including French Franc, and German Mark. For now, please choose one country that you think is the most representative country of the euro area. Use the price index and the exchange rate of the national currency of that country from year 1990 to 1998 and the exchange rate of euro from 1999 to latest year available. Please explain your choice. (go to Q3)
  - (a) France
  - (b) Germany
  - (c) Italy
  - (d) Spain

## Part 2. Exchange rates

3. There are two databases where you can find annual nominal exchange rates between the Canadian dollar and the three regions that you have chosen in Part 1. Compare these two databases and use the one that you think is more appropriate in your research. Please explain your choice. (go to Q4)
  - (a) International Financial Statistics
  - (b) CANSIM



Currently available at

[econassign.dal.ca](http://econassign.dal.ca)

### **Basic steps**

- Instructor access
- Add course
- Student permission
- Add assignment
- Question mapping
- Save as draft or submit

# So far

International Finance (3rd year), Winter 2016: 32 students

- Incremental implementation
- Reduced anxiety
- Increased transparency
- Increased assignment submission rate

THANK YOU

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